

the texts actually say. The author is passionate about the value of the Bible but the need to wrestle with it rather than to look to it for easy answers that can simply be believed or applied. She discusses a wide range of examples of the Bible containing things which are immoral, contradictory, strange or just not what a contemporary Christian might assume. She introduces various factors that may help people understand these (being clear that understanding does not necessarily mean agreement), whether literary conventions, cultural background, or the texts coming from different sources and historical contexts. While there is little that would be new to scholars, there is much good and well-informed discussion on particular texts or topics that would serve its intended readers well, especially in an American context. However, readers will need to be prepared for some rapid shifts from one issue to another rather than a carefully paced argument.

KEITH BEECH-GRÜNEBERG

TIGAY, JEFFREY H., and ADELE BERLIN (eds.), *Ancient Israel, from its Beginnings through 332 BCE* (The Posen Library of Jewish Culture and Civilization, 1; New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2021), pp. lxii + 538. \$175.00 (hardback). ISBN: 978-0-300-13550-3.

In this first volume of a 10-volume series covering the 3500-year history of the Jewish people, the Bible—clearly the number one cultural product of the most ancient period of Judaism—predominates. The work presents the biblical text (using the NJV) on about 370 pages and extra-biblical material on about 145 pages. The biblical material is organized by genres: Long Prose Narratives (Gen.–Kgs, Chron.–Neh.), Short Prose Narratives (Jon., Ruth, Est., Dan. 1–6), Law and Legal Documents, Classical Prophecy, Poetry, Prayers, Wisdom Literature, etc. All told, 47% of the HB appears in the volume. If extra-biblical material is available, such texts are inserted at the proper place, e.g. the Meşad Hashavyahu ostrakon within the Law and Legal Documents section. Only Israelite/Jewish material is included, per the purview of the Posen Library series; thus, while Hammurapi’s Code is mentioned in the introduction to the aforementioned section, its individual laws are not included, even when close parallels obtain. Biblical scholars will appreciate the effort of the editors in selecting and arranging the biblical passages, but the real benefit of this volume resides in the c. 300 images (about half in colour, about half in black-and-white), along with the collection of extra-biblical texts (inscriptions, etc.). The nearly 100-page section entitled ‘The Forms of Visual Culture and Performing Arts’ (pp. 283-378) is a *tour de force*. Scores of objects (figurines, amulets, seals, ivories, altars, ceramics, textiles, jewellery, etc.) are presented with excellent descriptions. Ancient Hebrew inscriptions have been collected by other scholars (most notably Shmuel Ahituv) into single volumes, but no one to my knowledge has created a catalogue of ancient Israelite plastic arts like the one available here (think *ANEP*, perhaps, though with a focus on Israel alone). A thoughtful general introduction, useful shorter introduction to the various sections, maps, charts, indexes and more only enhance the volume. Best of all, the entirety is available freely online at the accompanying website (<http://www.posenlibrary.com/>), including all the images. Highly recommended.

GARY A. RENDSBURG